

INNOTRANS

Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Action Plan for enhancing transport innovation capacity in the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece



ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALONIKI



TRANSPORT SYSTEMS
RESEARCH
GROUP

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This document is a short English version of the Action Plan elaborated by AUTH team for the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece, in the frame of INNOTRANS project of Interreg Europe Program in order to enhance the regional transport innovation capacity. It comprises an executive summary of the regional Action Plan whose full version was produced in Greek (national language).

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General information

Project: INNOTRANS

Title in English: Enhancing transport innovation capacity of regions

Title in Greek (national language): Ενίσχυση της ικανότητας καινοτομίας των Περιφερειών στις μεταφορές

Partner: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Transport Systems Research Group
(TSRG/AUTH)



Country: Greece

NUTS2 region: Region of Central Macedonia (RCM)

Contact persons: Prof. Aristotelis Naniopoulos, Vasiliki (Vasia) Amprasi

Email addresses: naniopou@civil.auth.gr, vasiaamprasi@gmail.com

Phone numbers: +30-2310995765, +30-2310995815

Executive Summary

Introduction - INNOTRANS project

INNOTRANS project, entitled “Enhancing transport innovation capacity of the regions”, is co-funded by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the frame of the territorial cooperation Interreg Europe Program. It aims to enhance the transport innovation capacity of regions by improving the existing regional policies and contributing to the cultivation of a culture of continuous transport innovation that minimizes risks and boosts competitiveness. The project provides the policy makers with the necessary evidence and a solid knowledge base to better distribute funds for supporting transport innovation infrastructure and capacity building activities.

The international partners comprising the consortium are coming from the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic, and Romania. It worth mentioning that **AUTH team (TSRG/AUTH)** joined INNOTRANS project in the beginning of the 3rd semester of the project’s time duration, by replacing another Greek partner. Despite that it came on board one year later than other partners, it managed to catch up successfully the progress already produced by the partnership.

Through INNOTRANS project, TSRG/AUTH is going to enhance the innovation capacity of the transport related ecosystem of the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) for promoting the competitiveness and economic sustainability of the area. Towards that direction, the **Action Plan** has been elaborated and its short version in English is presented hereafter.

Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact an Investment for Jobs and Growth program.

The policy instrument addressed by the INNOTRANS project is the **Regional Operational Programme of the Region of Central Macedonia 2014-2020 (ROP)**, with costs being eligible until the end of 2023.

Designed and developed in line with all the national and European strategies (Europe 2020), policies and their targets towards a smart sustainable and inclusive EU, it aims to tackle every kind of challenge within the RCM taking into account the current regional conditions and its real needs. One of the main strategic goals of the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) both for the ongoing and for the next programming period is stimulating innovation within the region towards regional growth and competitiveness.

The Region of Central Macedonia, realizing the importance of the transport sector and its role as a cross-sectoral regional development variable, recognized that it should be treated not only by investing in infrastructure, as it has been so far, but also by promoting innovation actions and innovation capacity activities. Towards that direction, this Action Plan produced in the frame of INNOTRANS project aims to enrich ROP through fostering regional transport innovation capacity and helping RCM to establish and empower the regional transport innovation ecosystem.

Action Plan development

All of the activities and methodologies implemented in the frame of INNOTRANS project were intended to feed the final deliverable of Action Plan. As a result, AUTH team followed the steps below, in accordance with the consortium's guidelines:

- Analysis of the current state of the **regional transport innovation framework** and mapping of the relevant ecosystem
- **Interregional meetings** for exchange of knowledge, experience and know-how through study visits, workshops, presentations, workshops etc.
- Exchange of territorial **good practices** and evaluation of their potential transferability
- **Local stakeholder meetings**, individual interviews with representatives of key transport stakeholders and other dissemination and feedback events
- **Additional meetings** and constant communication with the **Region of Central Macedonia** as the beneficiary of this Action Plan and responsible for its implementation
- Support from **external expert** for the development of the regional Action Plan as AUTH's subcontractor
- Validation of the proposed action at the **local dissemination event** realized in Thessaloniki in the form of a policy event involving transport experts and transport business executives from Greece and abroad
- Exploitation of the insights and feedback gained from all the above and set up of the **final Action Plan**

From all the above activities, the complexity of relationships among ecosystem's actors and the necessity of good communication and networking among the transport players was stressed and emphasized. In addition, cultivating a culture of 'producing locally thinking at the same time globally', having a world-wide business, research and innovation orientation (extroversion) appears to be desirable.

An overview of the process of developing the Action Plan for enhancing transport innovation capacity in the Region of Central Macedonia elaborated by AUTH in the frame of INNOTRANS project is presented in Figure 1 below.

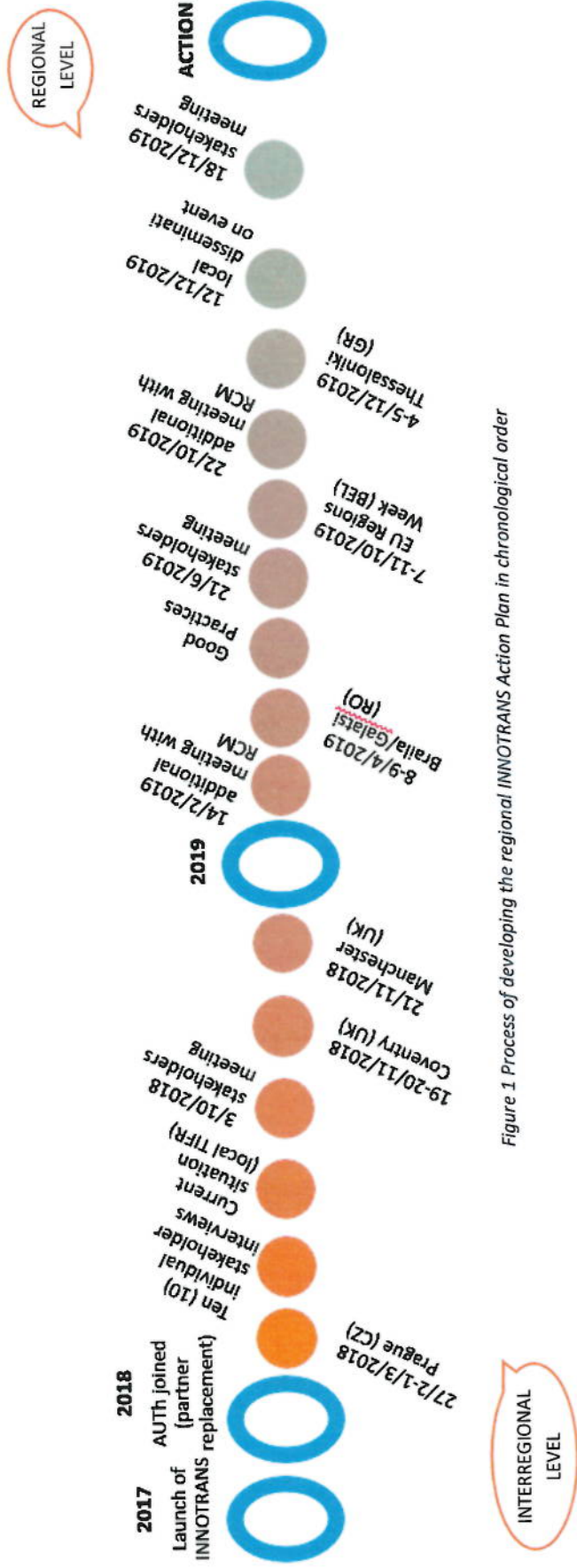


Figure 1 Process of developing the regional INNOTRANS Action Plan in chronological order



Actions

Two actions proposed to be implemented in the Region of Central Macedonia during Phase 2 of INNOTRANS project are briefly analyzed below. Their common goal, drawn by the close cooperation between RCM and AUTH project team as well as by the findings of all the activities of Phase 1, was to **ensure coordinated and effective communication within the transport innovation ecosystem of RCM**. The achievement of this objective was incorporated in the following two actions in order to enhance the capacity of the Region and to strengthen the ecosystem. The conclusions derived from all the local and interregional activities of Phase 1 of the INNOTRANS played an important role in forming and shaping the action.

It worth mentioning that the expected impact and fine-tuning of the actions in order to ensure coordinated and effective communication were extensively discussed at the last (3rd) local stakeholder meeting held in Thessaloniki on 18 December 2019. At the same time, its importance was confirmed by Greek transport researchers/scientists and transport professionals working in Greece and abroad in the context of the round table discussion at the end of the dissemination event organized in December 2019 on "Innovation in Transport: Major trends and emerging opportunities."

Action 1: "Facilitating the communication among key transport innovation players"

Background

Cooperation through exchange of experience, of information and of know-how has been recognized worldwide as one of the key success factors for achieving regional development and societal progress. The same applies in the case of innovation, where effective communication multiplies the dynamic potential of an ecosystem and leads to the desired enhancement of its ability to pioneer and act outside tight boundaries.

Through (i) the local version of the overview of transport innovation framework analysis report, (ii) the local stakeholders' meetings foreseen by the AF and (iii) the additional meetings with the representatives of RCM throughout the whole duration of phase 1, it derived that:

- transport innovation initiatives by the local businesses are rather scattered and not shared among them preventing the establishment of possible synergies
- communication channels among the transport innovation stakeholders are missing, hindering networking and cooperation
- local Authorities are not aware of the real transport innovation capacity of the Region leading to a non-straightforward policy making process

On the contrary, many successful examples of clusters and transport related partnerships can be found abroad which develop innovative projects and continuously generate new ideas through the established cooperation of their member organizations coming from different backgrounds.

Such an example is the Good Practice GP - "*Midlands Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Cluster (MCAV cluster)*" from the UK, which **inspired** this Action Plan for the Region of Central Macedonia of Greece. It is an attempt launched to bring together key players in the emerging field of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV) in the West Midlands, the center of this industry in the United Kingdom, in order to commonly address emerging issues and increase the opportunities for interaction among businesses, policy makers and investors. Through hard work, the cluster has been able to achieve growing membership and become financially sustainable (self-financed). MCAV creates opportunities, encourages partnerships, provides advice and promotes jobs using conferences and interactive expert group meetings as a basis for networking events. Holding three meetings a year, it has already supported the establishment of some successful development project bid consortia.

Given the fact that strengthening the relationships within the "Triple Helix" was identified as crucial by the INNOTRANS conclusions in Phase 1 in RCM, this Good Practice was a good example to inspire PP6-AUTH on how the closer cooperation of the transport innovation ecosystem could be achieved. Useful elements could be drawn for the formulation of the action proposed in the frame of this Action Plan, in particular by adopting frequent stakeholders meetings for information sharing, networking, business presentation, as it is being done in the above cluster. The "engagement" of the players of the ecosystem and the promotion of synergies is considered of great importance for cultivating a continuous innovation culture in the Region.

This Good Practice was presented by INNOTRANS Lead Partner and a representative of the MCAV cluster itself, during the interregional thematic workshop of the project held in Coventry (UK) on 19 and 20 November 2018 on the theme of 'Intelligent' transport and "smart" mobility. The presentation delivered by Mr Don Dhaliwal and his participation at the meeting were extremely helpful in understanding the goals, actions and results from within the cluster. As Mr Dhaliwal distinctively mentioned in his presentation, '*collaboration to accelerate innovation*' is prerequisite.

Furthermore, the Interreg Europe concept itself has **inspired** this Action Plan. The Communication and Dissemination Strategy that the Program designs and implements horizontally was the element exploited in the action described in the next section. Ongoing dissemination and information on existing innovative projects/initiatives plays an important role as it can both motivate and inspire other local players to be active and/or collaborate. Being aware of what is going on in the area allows avoidance of any possible overlapping and scattering of similar independent efforts giving the opportunity of potential synergies and complementary initiatives.

Description

The coordination of communication and networking within the transport innovation ecosystem will be implemented by the Region of Central Macedonia under the auspices of the Directorate for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support of the Region.

Facilitating the communication among key transport innovation players is proposed to be implemented, among others, by carrying out activities such as thematic entrepreneurial discovery meetings, networking events and workshops focused on innovation on the under-study sector. This action aims to help RCM to establish and empower the regional transport innovation ecosystem. The action focuses on better **coordination of networking** within the Region, **facilitation of the communication** among the key transport players as well as **information sharing**.

Activities that could take place towards this direction in the frame of Action 1 could, indicatively but not binding, take the following forms in order to achieve their goal:

- Thematic meetings (in the form of “workshops” e.g. Entrepreneurial Discovery Process-style on Transport) aiming at identifying current and future trends as well as areas of interest for transport researchers and businesses (consultation with transport stakeholders to identify the priorities of transport innovation policies)
- Dissemination and information events following the announcement of the call, focusing on organizations of the transport sector that could bid (potential beneficiaries of the call)

Regarding the above activities-events, the use of modern methods of interactive workshops and participatory planning will be examined, such as the World Café method, brainstorming method, etc.

More specifically, with the view to effectively coordinate networking among key transport actors, an attempt will be made to establish frequent thematic meetings on transport innovation with, at least, one event every semester for engagement, active participation and update of the interested bodies. This way stakeholders will be able to integrate into their program or “get prepared” for these meetings much earlier as, for example, in the case of other major organizations such as industry trade fairs, business conferences, etc. Thus, governance improvement could be achieved, and RCM could be assisted in strengthening the regional innovation ecosystem.

This kind of ROP influence can encourage regional growth which is one of the main strategic goals of the Region of Central Macedonia both for this and for the next programming period.

Players involved

The beneficiary of this Action Plan is the Region of Central Macedonia, which is also responsible for its implementation. The action included herein was designed by AUTH research team and will be implemented under the auspices of the Regional Directorate for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support and the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Support Mechanism (One Stop Liaison Office - OSLO) which is part of the Directorate. Besides, the Support Mechanism is funded by the

Regional Operational Program of Central Macedonia (ROP) and, in this sense, linking the actions of the Action Plan with it, constitutes an influence of RCM's policy instrument.

In addition, all the actors that comprise the regional innovation and/or transport ecosystem are identified as relevant stakeholders. Local public Authorities, innovation incubators, researchers, transport companies, transport operators, and others, will both contribute and benefit from the estimated impact of the action.

Timeframe

During the two-year (2-year) period of Phase 2 of the INNOTRANS project, ie until the end of 2021, they are planned to be implemented:

- ✓ at least two thematic meetings in the form of entrepreneurial discovery process and the use of a method to "engage" participants (one within 2020 and one, most likely, in the first semester of 2021). The theme and objective of each meeting will be different, depending on the needs of RCM at the time of meeting realization, in order to improve the policy towards the enhancement of transport innovation capacity.
- ✓ at least two dissemination events on the funding opportunities provided by RCM concerning transport innovation (at least one in 2020 and one in 2021)

The aim is to establish regular communication among key transport innovation stakeholders, which is intended to be cultivated as the way of working and to continue existing later on, even after the project ends.

Costs and Funding sources (if relevant)

The action will not require additional financial resources. It is planned to be implemented under the auspices of the Region of Central Macedonia and any costs incurred will be covered by own resources under the ROP through the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism.

Action 2: Mapping and presenting the key transport innovation stakeholders in the form of information material

Background

By the activities carried out in Phase 1 of INNOTRANS project and the constant communication with representatives of RCM, it was revealed that:

- local Authorities are not aware of the real transport innovation capacity of the Region leading to a non-straightforward policy making process
- information flow among the transport innovation stakeholders is problematic, making it difficult to identify the relevant responsible bodies and preventing their exploitation

- transport innovation initiatives by the local businesses are rather scattered and not shared among them
- although there are many businesses innovating in ICT in the RCM, only few of them have focused on transport related fields

Creating to-the-point and up-to-date information material as well as providing it to potential beneficiaries, will contribute to an effective information flow that will promote innovation and enhance RCM's potential. In other words, through the INNOTRANS project, it is intended to complement the services already provided by the Innovation & Entrepreneurial Support Mechanism of RCM by "adding" the aspect of transport to activities that otherwise would not include this perspective or would not include it so advanced. For example, mapping and summarizing the areas of interest and know-how of businesses related to the wider transport sector so that every citizen / business / researcher / etc be able to be informed about the stakeholders that could add value at any stage of developing an innovative business initiative or creating an innovative product or service. The INNOTRANS Action Plan will contribute to the underlining of regional transport innovation potential and it will indirectly influence the ROP funds that are allocated to the Innovation & Entrepreneurial Support Mechanism, which is responsible for the mapping of stakeholders and researchers of various sectors within RCM. Thus, the action described below incorporates and highlights the transport sector in the actions of this Mechanism, a parameter that otherwise would not have been analyzed in depth.

This kind of informational material (e.g. in the form of leaflets) was first noticed and collected by AUTH's project team during the study visit that took place in Coventry, UK, on 20th of November 2018. This action **was inspired** by it. There were printed brochures that informed everyone who was interested about the services provided by each research center, each university and institution of the area to a business that wanted to develop an innovative product or service.

In addition, it could be said that the Policy Learning Platform of the Interreg Europe Program was an **inspiration** for Action 2. The fact that it concentrates and provides free access to information of significant volume (e.g. Good Practices, webinars, etc) on a single website was considered extremely useful. The platform contributes significantly to the process of exchange of experiences within the European Union. It also provides the interface and enables the search for other partners for a project, fact that facilitates and promotes partnerships. The elements of providing (i) concentrated categorized information in one place and (ii) fostering potential synergies, were those that the project team set out and wanted to incorporate into the proposed Action 2 of the regional Action Plan.

Description

In order to support and enhance the transport innovation capacity of RCM, it is proposed to design and prepare information material that will map and categorize the actors or "active parties" that foster and facilitate innovation in general and innovation on transport in particular, presenting their fields of interest and making them widely known.

Firstly, the collection of the needed data for the identification, mapping and categorization of the regional stakeholders that can contribute to the enhancement of transport innovation capacity will take place. The data will be collected in every possible way, e.g. desktop research, personal contacts, verified websites, published papers, and possibly a series of personal interviews with the key stakeholders involved. After the data collection, the elaboration and filtering of the concentrated information will follow, the selection of the most appropriate ones to be included in the final content to be produced, as well as the graphic or diagrammatic/schematic processing if necessary. Finally, the material will be publicly published and disseminated.

The material that will be prepared for RCM will briefly present and summarize the area of expertise of each stakeholder's organization and the services provided by RCM regarding the INNOTRANS topic. Thus, anyone interested will know who is responsible to address for an issue in terms of both the design and the whole process of producing the innovative service or/and product. Indicative issues may be: copyright, the development and empowerment of an early-stage idea, and so on. The electronic version of the material will be preferred taking into account the non-environment friendly nature of the printed brochures and aiming at protecting the environment which is part of the philosophy of the Region of Central Macedonia.

The information that will be collected and elaborated, will feed the One Stop Liaison Office of the ROP-funded Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism of RCM. The information on transport innovation will feed both the RCM's databases so as to be aware of the real innovation capacity and the information provision to the interested citizens. Apart from mapping the sector that is of great importance for the policy making process of RCM, another outcome of Action 2 will be the support of networking between researchers and businesses as well as the development of potential synergies.

Players involved

The beneficiary of this Action Plan is the Region of Central Macedonia, which is also responsible for its implementation. The action included herein was designed by AUTH research team and will be implemented under the auspices of the Regional Directorate for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support and the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Support Mechanism (One Stop Liaison Office - OSLO) which is part of the Directorate and is funded by the ROP. Besides, the Support Mechanism is funded by the Regional Operational Program of Central Macedonia (ROP) and, in this sense, linking the actions of the Action Plan with it, constitutes an influence of RCM's policy instrument.

As relevant stakeholders are identified all those who produce or support the design or/and the implementation of transport innovation. Research teams, know-how providers, consultants, innovation incubators, chambers, public services for the entrepreneurship support, businesses of the transport sector, and others who will either be included in the content of the information material or will benefit from its publication.

Timeframe

The action is planned to be implemented within a period of two (2) years during Phase 2 of the INNOTRANS project, ie by the end of 2021. In 2020 and 2021 the content of the information material will be collected, elaborated, documented, uploaded and widely disseminated.

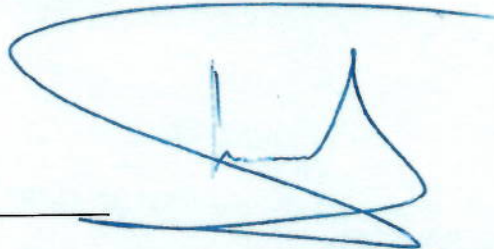
Costs and Funding sources (if relevant)

The action will not require additional financial resources as it will be implemented under the auspices of the Region of Central Macedonia and any costs incurred will be covered by own resources under the ROP through the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism and its One Stop Liaison Office.

Έγκριση / Endorsement

Ημερομηνία/Date: 27/09/2020

Υπογραφή/Signature: _____



Σφραγίδα του οργανισμού/Stamp of the organisation: _____



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